

# Commission Declares Drought Emergency

With reservoir storage and ground water supplies well below seasonal averages, the commission declared a drought emergency on December 18, 2001.

Under the emergency order, the commission was empowered to call for releases from federal, state, and privately-owned reservoirs to augment flows in the Delaware River and tributary streams. This additional volume of water in the waterways helps protect aquatic life and repel the upstream migration of salty water from the Delaware Bay, which can cause corrosion problems for riverbank industry and increase water treatment costs for public water suppliers.

The reservoir releases complemented those from three large water supply reservoirs at the headwaters of the Delaware River which were at record low levels.

Combined storage in the impoundments (Cannonsville, Pepacton, and Neversink) stood at just over 63 billion gallons in mid-December, about 115 billion gallons below normal for that time of year. It was the lowest level since the last of the three reservoirs, which are owned by New York City, went on line in 1967.

Under the declaration, water stored at two hydro-electric facilities—Lake Wallenpaupack, located near Hawley, Pa., and the Mongaup reservoir system in New York

State—became available to help increase river flows, as did water stored in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' F.E. Walter Reservoir, located on a tributary of the Lehigh River, and in Lake Nockamixon, a recreational reservoir owned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania which is located on Tohickon Creek.

A vast amount of drought-related information can be viewed on-line at <http://www.nj.gov/drbc/drought/droughthpframeset.htm>.



As shown above, water levels in Cannonsville Reservoir dropped to record lows during December of 2001. *Photo courtesy of the Press & Sun Bulletin*